

TALKING PAPER FOR EUROPEAN TRIP

SUBJECT: Nigeria-Biafra

Background

European Concern with the Problem

There is widespread public concern over the starvation in Biafra. All countries on your itinerary -- particularly the Germans and Italians -- have contributed to the relief effort through the Red Cross and their own voluntary agencies. The Pope has tried in vain, including formal letters to Gowon and Ojukwu, to get a cease-fire and negotiations. (The Federal Government regards the Catholic relief agencies and the Vatican as biased toward the predominantly Christian Biafrans. The Pope has been scrupulously neutral; the relief agencies have not.)

The real policy stake lies with:

The British, who face a volatile domestic issue over (a) their strong backing, including arms, for Federal Nigeria which was their colonial creation; and (b) considerable back-bench support for Biafran relief and even self-determination. Wilson will be looking for assurance that you are not undercutting his policy by shifting to support of the rebels.

The French, whose arms keep the Biafrans going. De Gaulle may press you either to: (a) join him in outright support of Biafra, or (b) endorse some kind of "neutral" solution which gives Biafra de facto sovereignty.

General Approach

There are two main lines to follow consistent with our high-relief, low-political silhouette policy:

- *British* The Europeans should be prepared, as we are, to support generously the international relief effort as the need increases over the coming weeks.
- The United States will actively encourage an expansion of relief, but will avoid political involvement with either side.

Talking Points

1. We are deeply concerned over the humanitarian problem
 - We will do as much as we can to encourage a relief arrangements between the two sides.
 - The Europeans should join us with both encouragement of an agreement and financial support of the international relief operation.
2. We recognize very clearly that this is a thorny political situation
 - While we seek expanded relief, we are going to avoid as much as possible any political involvement on either side.
 - The civil war is a local and African problem. Outside interference to resolve political issues has little chance of success, and might only complicate the necessary role outsiders must play in the relief effort.
3. (For Wilson) We shall stay clear of political involvement
 - We have no intention of supporting or recognizing Biafra.
 - We shall quietly regard a Federal victory -- to the degree it prevents further bloodshed and instability in the area -- as in our best interests.
4. (For de Gaulle) We will be active in encouraging the relief effort
 - Our policy is not shifting toward political support of Biafra.
 - We think it very unwise for outsiders to attempt to impose a solution under any formula.
 - We would hope that the French will use their influence with Biafra to help get a relief agreement.
5. (For the Pope)

Though we see no role for ourselves in a mediation effort, we hope His Holiness will continue to encourage the warring parties and other Africans to seek the earliest negotiated settlement.